

# Psychological Effects of First Language Attrition on Undergraduate English Level Learners in Faisalabad

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## Abstract

For many years, researchers have debated the impact of a learner's second language (L2) on their first language (L1). The general goal of this study is to identify the psychological elements that contribute to first language loss when learning a second language. Because this study is limited to Faisalabad, the first language is Urdu, and the data was gathered from undergraduate English as a second language students. The present study investigates to what degree English, as a second language, learners feel it difficult to communicate in a foreign language environment. English language classrooms of two universities including a private and government-level university have been taken as a sampling frame. Data have been collected through questionnaires which were given to twenty-five (25) students from each university. In addition, semi-structured interviews were done to assess replies. The findings demonstrated that psychological abruptions are a primary cause of the smothering of the first language to the constraints of foreignness and oddity in English Language Learners. The study finds that improved language education rules are required, and students should be able to utilize their first and second languages in day-to-day conversation. The study is useful for improving pedagogical practice in English Language Teaching (ELT).

**Keywords:** First Language Attrition, Language Retention, Language Maintenance, Teaching Practices, Language Loss

## Introduction

English holds the status of Lingua Franca in this wayward temporal sphere. Urdu holds the status of National Language in Pakistan. As Ahmadi (2017) claims in Pakistan the global and Asian shift has increased the inclusivity towards English. English has the status of a global language. It determines the stature and position of

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a person in the society. Blake (2014) reports English holds the license to global opportunities. It plays a resultant role in the portfolio of an educated person. In Pakistan, the drift is very vibrant but the curve has a deep slot. This jape has led undergraduate learners into utter difficulty. As, Schmid (2009) rightfully claims that when a learner is bound to be on the path of bilingualism, one language suffers. In Pakistan, English Language teaching strategies are at geological fractions. They have put the learners in a confused state of mind. An undergraduate second language learner doesn't know his /her language priorities. Urdu has been amalgamated with English which has formed an advanced term accentuated as, "Colorful English". Learners get puzzled and language attrition happens. It is a process that continues from the part where learners are bewildered and stuck in academic settings. It is essential to restrict the attiring process by giving it the maximum focus and strategies should be evolved to monitor the process.

## Background of the study

The English language has changed more dangerously than in the past, which has had an impact on languages all over the world. Pakistan is the country where this phenomenon is most prevalent, with the Urdu language suffering greatly as a result. There are differences in educational attainment between government and private universities in Pakistan. Different degrees of instruction in language studies, particularly in English as a second language, are provided by both. It also lends credence to the theory that students are experiencing psychological abruptness and language attrition.

## Literature Review

Numerous consequences arise from language analysis for educators, researchers, and pedagogy (Kenji, 1992). Three things make the findings relevant. They are significant to teachers first and foremost because they show the growth of their students. Second, because they shed light on how language is acquired and the strategies used by learners, they are valuable to researchers. Last but not least, they are crucial to learners because they allow them to grow from their errors and enhance their second language (L<sub>2</sub>) while still remembering the importance of exposure to their native tongue (L<sub>1</sub>). James (2001) states that attrition analysis starts with the TL itself being characterized independently or objectively, then comparing the two to find inconsistencies. The learners' IL (Individuals' Language, their

interpretation of TL) comes next. Although there are numerous additional reasons for language deviations, the method is also controversial because it is impossible to discount the likelihood of mother tongue-related language aberrations.

Language attrition as a theory has captivated people's interest over the years, and different studies on second language attrition have been conducted in an attempt to characterize the system but they were solely focused on second language loss (Schmid, 2013, p.225).

English language instruction has changed recently to put the requirements of each student ahead of those of the teacher. The focus of modern teaching approaches is the student as the center of attention in the classroom. English language training has always had a very clear future. This marks the beginning of a new era in education where native language expression is valued in addition to English. The capacity to deliver the decision in the recipient's original language, if required, is one of the most important communication skills to develop (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017). It has been demonstrated that cooperative learning (CL), a student-centered teaching approach, increases students' enthusiasm for learning a new language, whether it be their mother tongue or a foreign one. They need to make the classroom more learner-focused and employ this strategy more often (Ahmadi, 2017, p.133).

In recent years, the breadth of language attrition has changed (Proctor, 2016, p.145). In most situations, the language that is most likely to be lost is the first language (Blake, 2014, p. 111). At some point, the many features of language loss throughout the process of learning a second language (L2, L3... L10) become resistant. This resistance results in cross-linguistic interference, which most likely sets up a situation where the two languages eventually blend (Fillmore, 1991, p. 210).

Language shifting and attrition are hyponyms for one another, and they are connected by the hyponymic loss of language proficiency (Hansen, 2001, p. 12).

The intensity of language performance and the formation of rare language forms are likewise impacted by language attrition (De Bot, 2007, p. 14). The loss of one's first language (L1) on an individual basis is the most crucial component to consider when analyzing the factors causing language attrition. Language attrition should not include neurological reasons or any sublimations. They don't discuss how learning a second language causes language loss (Kopke, 2004, p.134).

Research on language attrition was carried out, for instance, by Riehl and Optiz (2011). They used Brazilian pupils to process the regression hypothesis. They discovered that they were all in danger of losing their Portuguese first language (L<sub>1</sub>). The instructors' emphasis on French competency as a second language was the root of this linguistic loss. Some of the kids were unable to write a response in both languages when the students used to combine the languages. They get double-minded in their approach. This happens usually in university classrooms, where a second language (L<sub>2</sub>) learner focuses more on the target language and finds them unable to communicate in their first language (L<sub>1</sub>).

Schmid (2004) presented his first language attrition model, rejecting the notion that a person's ability varies. In terms of grammar and pragmatics, it differs. He conducted more research in secondary high school classrooms and discovered that students typically struggle with their first language (L<sub>1</sub>). This is because there are differences in the languages kids hear and learn. They are not being instructed on how to learn a language; instead, the English language teaching (ELT) community has propagated the idea that native tongues are picked up subconsciously rather than through instruction. Furthermore, Beiser (2000) studied language loss in female South Asian refugees using a similar approach. They made their home in China and India's eastern core regions. He suggested that they were not only not fluent in their second language (L<sub>2</sub>) but also in danger of losing their first language (L<sub>1</sub>). Using information from the position of power over refugee camps, he deduced that language is a cycle of reincarnation that never ends. In case a human being's chain breaks due to extreme convulsions, all they would have left would be a resurrection in their hands.

In the end, Hopp (2013) conducted a case study that investigated the effects of second language attrition. He stated that language loss occurs when an individual is either bilingual or multilingual. It indicates that even with second language proficiency, some things are still forgotten and that after some time, others get dissatisfied. Non-pathological languages come in a variety of forms (Kenji, 1992, p. 443). When someone has dementia, they frequently have language loss. The same kind of language loss also affected them when various clinical and diagnostic conditions attacked.

However, the changes in the first language brought on by the second language are what create the non-pathological linguistic changes. Furthermore, crucial to second language retention is the function of motivating situations (Gardener, 2002; Lalonde 2003, Evers, 1987). The loss of French language among pupils in the 12th grade was examined by the researchers. They made a comparison between the pupils who received encouragement to acquire a second language and the ones who did not. The findings demonstrated that the attrition rate in Spanish, their first language (L1), remained constant even in the face of strong motivation. It led to changes in Language Teaching (LT), which argues that second language instruction ought to occur in distinct settings. It narrowed the purpose of the outlines employed in the linguistic environment and circumscribed the methods of teaching languages.

In the field of language attrition, Kopke and Benjamin (2007) studied the non-conventional brain functioning that occurs when a language is on the road to losing its comprehension and comprehension. Brain functions change when a student sets out to acquire a language of interest, which can range from L4 to L10. The student with the best cramming skills is the one who seems to be the most intelligent. Merino (1983), in contrast, incorporated the anthropological and archaeological evidence of primordial language behaviors. He discovered that our forefathers were Foucault entities. Despite having received extensive training in several languages, it was very clear from the evidence that they were fluent in only one. It led to the theory that a student can only be skilled in one. It resulted in the hypothesis that a learner can only be proficient in one language despite having various forms of languages in a portfolio of sociolinguistic apprehension of languages.

Nevertheless, there is a lack of research on the factors affecting first language loss as a result of second language acquisition in social contexts. Using a model, Kopke and Schmid (2004) praised the idea that first language (L1) and second language (L2) mutually influence each other. Language loss is caused by this affectation. They distinguished between two stages of language loss: dialect eradication and reversion. It introduced the notion that language might be lost when dialects and accents are emphasized due to linguistic reversal resolution. In contrast, the Schmid Attrition Lab (SAL) was formed by Merino et al. (1983). This was a response to the worldwide community's concerns about language loss and the polarity of language retention. This lab was used to experiment on English language instructors. These teachers were initially chosen based on curricular exchange components, which Kopke (2007) notes represent a shift in the way high school language loss is conceptualized.

First, in the classroom, and subsequently in a casual context, these English language instructors were watched. It made the teachers uncomfortable to teach English Language (EL) in casual settings. The majority of them contend that informal language education policies have no place in these outlines. As a result, language loss is facilitated by the manual and traditional methods of teaching languages. This puts an end to the discussion that learners are to blame for language attrition, to the point where English Language Teaching (ELT) practices, as well as learner comprehension, are extremely demanding.

## **Methodology**

### **❖ Research Design**

The research design is exploratory. This study will explore the factors involved in second language learning which affect a learner's mental health. Exploratory research includes the collection of data and the analysis of that data through observation, theoretical notions, and models (Edgar et al., 2017). Hence, the study includes an emphasis on the analytical and theoretical analysis of data collected through questionnaires, not creating new forms of models or designs.

### **❖ Research Method**

Language learning is recognized as a systematic process. If many aspects of language acquisition are not kept in mind, identity crisis and language loss will occur. As a result, language loss occurs at the undergraduate or mature level (Kopke, 2010, p.56). According to Schmitt (2009), there is a shortage of adequate language skills in the English teaching setting. He discovered that pupils learning English as a second language are unaware of its true function. The language being employed is not what it appears to be. Second language (L2) learners should develop competence so that they know when to speak and when not to speak, what they are talking about, and how to utilize terminology. These can be passed on. These can be taught using educational approaches.

### **❖ Population and Sampling**

The population for this study consists of undergraduate students, learning English as a second language at the university level. The research has covered 2 universities within Faisalabad and 25 students from each university have been tested. One university is a private sector and the other one is a government university. The selected universities for the sampling frame are Riphah International University,

Faisalabad (Private University), and Government College University, Faisalabad (Government University). The sampling method that is used for analyzing the first language attrition of English undergraduate students is probability sampling.

### ❖ Data Collection and Procedure

Questionnaires were used to obtain data from the pupils. The possibilities for these questions varied depending on their sector nominalization. Furthermore, private and public universities have various teaching methods. Students learn in transformative ways there. Each student was given a printed questionnaire to ensure validity and reliability. They were simple yes/no questions. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted if any of the questionnaire's prospects demanded a constructive response.

## Analysis

### ❖ Exploring the Feelings of Alienation by using First Language (L<sub>1</sub>) in Second Language (L<sub>2</sub>) Classrooms

By selecting the closed option, 'Yes,' 95% of the learners indicated their sense of estrangement while studying. They were emphasizing the fact that their identity suffers in second language schools. The concentration on utilizing a second language (L<sub>2</sub>) and not adhering to the point of first and second language shift are the reasons for this type of pain. Learners should be provided plenty of opportunities to utilize their first language (L<sub>1</sub>) in communicative situations. The sample population's first language is Urdu. After more investigation, it becomes evident that they think linguistic rights exist. They have the right to use whichever language they desire when necessary. Their comments suggest that the majority of them are concerned about the disappearance of the Urdu language. It was interesting to see how much English has influenced Urdu. The alterations that have become a part of the Urdu language are owing to the presence of the English language. Students are not permitted to use Urdu in academic settings for a variety of reasons, including the fact that they spend a significant amount of time there.

### ❖ Impeding Problems while using First Language (L<sub>1</sub>)

70% of students who are studying a second language have difficulty speaking. This involves using English words in a free fall during any Urdu speech. The fact that second language learners are becoming skilled in the language is exciting, but the L<sub>1</sub> loss process has begun and is already causing damage. Schmitt's (2009) model

provided a final stance on this sort of circumstance, which he refers to as a "cross-linguistic reference." He defines this word as appreciating the necessity for a first language (L1) and not focusing too much on the acquired language (L2). He firmly said that when a learner experiences trouble when employing his or her first language (L1), it indicates that the vivid *déjà vu* of language is about to begin.

The percentage of pupils here fluctuates based on circumstance. Private university students believe that speaking their first language (L1) does not empower them and that they do not want to utilize it. These students account for 30% of the total weightage. This is due to the ensuing confirmation that society has forced them into such a hazardous setting. It also contains the belief that they wish to be accepted by society. There are two criteria by which a person can be welcomed in South Asian etiquette, which are as follows:

- English
- Use of Sentential Complexity

Crook (2021) proposed these settings that appear to be appropriate for the system. It is also noted that English is a medium of global learning, yet as language progress continues, the focus is on the British or American accent of the English language, which can be difficult to acquire at times. It is widely assumed that individuals who speak English are superior learners with excellent prospects. However, it presents difficulties for first language (L1) learners. He/she feels frustrated because his/her first language is not permitted to be utilized. Attriters were found to provide fewer genders to nouns when employing English-borrowed terms in Russian than is customary in Russian. Words that ended in consonants were classed as male in this updated approach to gender classification, which maintained to adoption of a simplified phonological structure from Russian rather than English. The study suggests that L1 attrition occurred in line with an L1-internal pattern, supporting the assumption that L1 attrition was caused by language-internal mechanisms rather than L2 transmission.

It is critical to recognize that even when reduction and generalizations perform the function in language attrition (L1), they are most likely performed by language attriters; they are the result of second language (L2) impact on first language (L1) processing rather than independent first language (L1) reorganization. The L1-internal reorganization has traditionally been regarded as a distinct process from L2, even though the use of a second or third language is likely to induce such linguistic organization. According to research that contrasted groups of people



alignment with the same L1 but diverse second languages (L2), attrition is likely induced by using the second language alone rather than utilizing it for communication purposes. These data provide credence to the notion. Gunnewiek (1998), for example, investigated how language loss altered the importance of L2 interruption among multilingual Portuguese/Dutch and Portuguese/French speakers. Significant L2 interference was seen, expanding the evidence for L2 influence on semantics during L1 loss. Furthermore, Kopke's (1999) study found no evidence of a unique impact of L2 on Meta attrition among bilinguals speaking German, English, and French. L2 internal reorganization seemed to affect L1 attrition, contrary to the author's initial premise.

### **❖ Anxiousness about Abrasion of First Language (L1) while Learning Second Language (L2)**

Language attrition is a type of crisis that may affect any language from L1 to L10 or the synchronization that the human brain can maintain. The intense anxiety caused by language loss is detrimental to brain creativity. In 2010, the corpus labs at the University of Birmingham experimented on students who were experiencing second language attrition. They conducted a study on the amount of anxiety that a student has when his or her second language is modified. The findings revealed that some pupils had increased anxiety and were unable to focus on any type of language learning. It also emphasizes the notion that when one language declines, the language's attention shifts to the other language.

Anxiety leads to a decline in self-esteem. Almost 91% of students feel that first language loss is the key reason that no one discusses. It interferes with their regular communication. Students at private universities were similarly worried by the erosion of their first language. Government University students, on the other hand, claim that they have seen a minor shift in their linguistic harmony after beginning their degree in English. This results in the loss of one's first language. When a student was asked how she believed her language had changed after attending the language classroom.

She thought the phrasing had been somewhat altered. At first, she reasoned that by speaking English, her chances of gaining social regard would improve. But she soon realizes that it is Urdu that is required for daily communication. It would be a loss in any language if she did not adhere to any sort of language study in a good manner. It was intriguing to learn that pupils are concerned about the changes that a

language would bring into their lives. Schmitt (2011) placed the greatest emphasis on unknown language loss. It leads to the realization that language attrition should be prioritized according to how it begins processing in young minds. It further endorses the assumption that language should be retained as soon as it loses its usefulness. Schmitt depicts the concept of language tracking. The crucial one is the point at which a specific language begins to lose its purpose. According to the questionnaire responses, around 9% of the kids do not feel anxious. They think that they should be moving into a sophisticated world, where new languages are more important, rather than the ones associated with their identity. These are identification concepts; however, some students do not consider language or languages in these terms.

The majority of students believe that language change is tied to identity in some way. According to Kopke (2016), there are particular profusions in language evolution. It also emphasizes that language loss is a direct alteration in regular communication. Schmitt (2009) experimented on university students who were unable to cope with identity changes. These shifts are at the root of the existential dilemma. Ali (2010) also compared Pakistani university students to European university students. He discovered that Pakistani university students are pleased to use English. Furthermore, 9% of students who stated that they do not experience anxiety also stated that they believe Urdu is the most common language for them. Furthermore, the others are feeling alienated since their first language (L<sub>1</sub>) is being disregarded. Ultimately, this results in identity alterations.

The same is true for foreign language students who believe they are studying another language, most often L<sub>3</sub>. This gives the impression that they are likely to be reincarnated (Smith, 2013). They are uncomfortable utilizing another language yet wish to continue doing so owing to societal restrictions. This distinct approach is based on the premise that each language usage should be given suitable weightage, with the first language (L<sub>1</sub>) receiving the greatest attention. This ruminates on the premise that the native language is the first language, and it leads to identity discovery and purification. Teachers should encourage students to acquire a positive attitude towards learning a new language to develop their personalities. The findings indicate that anytime language is taught, it should be done in a teacher and learner-centered context where the identity stays intact and linked to the first language. The second language is learned as an extra skill to communicate with people from all over the world.

While taking the responses, the students were settled in the free environment where the instructors were not present so that they could answer irrespective of any external pressure.

## **Conclusion**

In English Language classes, 95% of pupils feel isolated. Urdu is Pakistan's native language, and it relates to the identity of every polydemic human who is a national of it. In contrast, 10% of students have high English-speaking abilities and claim to be able to speak it in a variety of modes, whereas 90% of learners' utterances have become unclear as a result of English as a second language study. As a result, when pupils get increasingly adept in English, they risk losing their native language. The areas that want development include pedagogical practices, proper course outlines, and equal emphasis is made to the first language. The indicated study also expressed worry that language loss in primary language might be detected at an early stage. This includes the obligation of the curriculum designers.

The results indicated that students feel alienated when they speak their first language in English as a second language classrooms, and this is due to the syllabus, which does not allow students to utilize their first language sufficiently. The syntactical issues found in the students' interviews demonstrate how English affects them in their everyday interactions. The mentioned research excludes the idea that students' minor topics, such as Pakistan Studies and Islamic Studies, be taught in their original language. Furthermore, learners should be permitted to speak their first language when they find it difficult to express themselves in English as a second language classroom.

If language practice falls short in both of these areas, the language suffers and requires preservation, which if not done on time leads to language loss. Though the teaching curriculum and pedagogical practices require significant development, students should be given equal standing so that they do not feel alienated in any way. The difficulties that learners experience in learning the English language in classrooms should be addressed properly, and the ideas should be considered by the Higher Education Commission so that future policies can be made about how effectively the first language can be maintained, and second language can also be taught in such a way that a balance between both languages (first language and

second language) can be maintained, which will eventually lead to first language maintenance.

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